



STATE OF MICHIGAN
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LANSING



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL P. FLANAGAN
SUPERINTENDENT OF
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MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Ms. Jennifer Haberling, 2008-2009 Michigan Teacher of the Year

SUBJECT: Teacher of the Year Report

**In Hudsonville
At Baldwin Street Middle School, room 135**

Seventh graders continue to study Greek mythology, focusing now on the explanatory myths they have written for an elementary audience. While drafting, we have focused on developing clear details, analyzing our audience, and composing a story frame that is clear, interesting, and engaging. I helped them to use a story skeleton presented at the MACUL conference by Dr. Jason Ohler ("Once upon a time... every day... until one day... because of that...because of that... because of that...and now...and so the moral of the story is...") which can be used to sketch out almost any famous story in print or on the big screen. We had fun noticing this pattern in all of our favorite movies, identifying in the myths we had read, and finally applying it to our own stories. While students were brainstorming, we used this format to get the gist of their stories down before they began to fill in important details. Using such a format ensures a problem-solution story that works well with explanatory mythology. Over the course of the next few weeks, they will turn their polished and revised drafts into children's books, incorporating design elements and tactics they have studied through real-world examples in published children's books. They have researched the scientific reasons for their myths, written a brief scientific explanation (which will be included in their children's books after the myth) in order to practice Modern Language Association format and documentation of research one last time this year, and composed an "About the Author" page to let their readers know a bit about themselves. While they put their finishing touches on their books, they are also studying Greek roots and enhancing their vocabulary.

Eighth graders are analyzing a variety of different political speeches and infomercials after studying the elements of Monroe's Motivated Sequence Design for persuasive speaking and a variety of rhetorical devices. We have watched and read

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Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream," then-Senator Barack Obama's "Yes We Can," and a selection of inaugural addresses to practice recognizing and analyzing the effectiveness of the call-to-action-type speech. When watching the different speeches, students used our class NING to discuss in an online forum the effectiveness of the various speeches and techniques they noticed. They have practiced writing their own call-to-action speeches when we engaged in *The Minister of Silly Talks*, convincing a parent audience to act on a variety of silly topics, ranging from why the family should buy a pet elephant to why they should travel to Jenison, Michigan for spring break next year, all using Monroe's Motivated Sequence Design and toying with the rhetorical devices we had studied (earlier in the year we played with *The Minister of Silly Walks* from Monty Python, applying it to characters in the book we were reading by designing a walk that would reveal something about the character they kept a secret from the class). Then they began to brainstorm topics for their real speeches, targeting needs of a middle school audience -- things they wanted their peers to do and not to do. They are giving these speeches to one another to practice good public speaking and persuasion, and they will eventually turn their message into a shorter public service announcement that will air for the whole school. All of this ties into our essential questions of what makes an effective leader and how individuals and ideas gain support.

Across the school

We have been working to finalize a master schedule, looking at where best to cut money without affecting student achievement. Much of the conversation has focused on creative and innovative ways to approach our jobs without losing all the positives we currently employ. Several staff members will move from the high school to the middle school to avoid teaching staff cuts, so we are planning for how to initiate these people into our departments and curriculum smoothly.

I met with my superintendent, Roxanne DeWeerd, about the Re-Imagine Project. As we brainstormed, we focused on several key areas where we could improve student achievement. In the case of Hudsonville, we are working to concentrate on the lowest tier of students who might need more support and could use some focused intervention using strategies that all students will benefit from. We made a list of possibilities, like training in Capturing Kids' Hearts, Response to Intervention implementation, and brain research that focuses on boys and classroom environment. Later, when meeting with my principal, Dave Powers, we also considered using a data warehouse to access more immediate formative and summative assessment information that would help teachers to more accurately group students and strategically plan instruction to meet the specific needs of the various sub-groups within a class.

In addition we are preparing for end-of-year activities and scheduling classes for next year. Our school improvement team continues to consider the grading policy we implemented in the fall, continuously improving the model and adjusting to address a variety of issues that arise.